

Fort Moultrie Civil War Exhibit Text

April 2002

The summer of 1860 was the beginning of turbulent times for the small garrison of Fort Moultrie. Captain Abner Doubleday wrote that the entire force “*consisted of sixty-one enlisted men and seven officers, together with thirteen musicians of the regimental band; whereas the work called for a war garrison of three hundred men.*”

The secession movement was growing. Radical southerners threatened to dissolve the Union if Abraham Lincoln was elected President. On November 6, 1860, Lincoln won the election. Four days later, the South Carolina Legislature authorized a December convention to consider secession. On December 20, 1860, South Carolina withdrew from the Union.

Under cover of darkness on December 26, 1860, Major Anderson and his troops slipped out of Fort Moultrie and crossed the harbor to the unfinished, but more defensible, Fort Sumter. Before leaving Fort Moultrie, they drove spikes into the cannons vents (touch holes) and set the wooden gun carriages on fire.

This incident aroused passions in both Charleston and Washington. Late the next day, South Carolina troops moved into Fort Moultrie.

Union Major Robert Anderson Commanding Officer - Fort Moultrie, Fort Sumter and Castle Pinckney

“...a gentleman, courteous, honest, intelligent, and thoroughly versed in his profession...In politics he was a strong pro-slavery man. Nevertheless, he was opposed to secession and Southern extremists.”

Robert Anderson was born near Louisville, Kentucky in 1805. He graduated from West Point in 1825, and eventually would become an instructor there. In 1857 he was promoted to major and three years later, in 1860, took command of U.S. troops in Charleston. In April 1861, after moving his headquarters from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter, he commanded U.S. troops during the opening battle of the Civil War. Promoted to brigadier general after the battle, he returned to Kentucky and served in the U.S. Army until bad health forced him to retire in 1863. Major Anderson died in 1871 while in Nice, France.

Label for wax figure:
Sergeant, Company E, 1st U.S. Artillery Regiment, 1860

Label for objects at the base of wax figure:

Model 1858 Eagle Hat Badge; Model 1841 U.S. Shoulder Belt Plate; Model 1841 U.S. Waist Belt Buckle

The Army began painting the fort's interior brick walls and buildings a yellow ochre color in an effort to protect the soft brick from the elements. Today, this color is used as an aid to identify the section restored to its original appearance in the early 1800s. A portion of this area is outlined in yellow above.

24 pound cannonball nearly identical to the one used in the Revolutionary War exhibit

Lieutenant George S. James 4th U.S. Artillery pictured in his dress uniform

George James was born in Laurens county South Carolina in 1829. He left college for the adventure of fighting in the Mexican War [1846-1848]. Commissioned a lieutenant in the U.S. Artillery in 1856, James resigned his commission on February 1, 1861 after learning of South Carolina's secession from the Union. He was then appointed a captain of the South Carolina Battalion of Artillery. On April 12, 1861, Captain James gave the command to fire the first shot of the war from Fort Johnson toward Fort Sumter. Promoted to lieutenant colonel, James commanded the 3rd South Carolina Infantry Battalion until his death on September 14, 1862 in the battle of South Mountain, Maryland.

Label for wax figure:

Second Lieutenant, 1st South Carolina Battalion Artillery 1861-1862

This is the unit that is pictured at Fort Moultrie in the large mural on the wall behind you. This drawing was made from a photo taken on April 16, 1861 - four days after the war started.

This group of images shows some of the damage done to Fort Moultrie during the April 12-13, 1861 bombardment. Though repaired, the fort was heavily damaged by Union artillery during the 1863-1865 siege of Charleston. In response, Confederates used sandbags, logs, timbers and earth to cover and protect large sections of the fort.

These are some examples of objects used by the fort's Confederate defenders. The ceramic bottle held beer. The glass flask is from the hospital. The South Carolina officer's belt buckle is very rare.

These pictures show the changes brought about to all masonry forts by the use of rifled artillery. It was discovered that as a defense against such artillery, mounds of earth or sand were a better fortification material than brick or stone. A shell would penetrate deep into the mound before

exploding harmlessly. In the two lower photographs, notice the use of earthen mounds between each gun position. Artist and Confederate soldier Conrad Wise Chapman produced these paintings in 1863.

Confederate General P. G. T. Beauregard Commanding Officer, Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard was born near New Orleans, Louisiana in 1818. He entered West Point in 1834 where he was instructed in artillery by Robert Anderson. After graduating second in a class of forty-five, Beauregard received his commission as an engineer and served with General Winfield Scott during the Mexican War where he was twice wounded. In March 1861, he resigned his U.S. Army commission, was appointed a brigadier general in the Confederate Army, and assigned to command forces in and about Charleston. Here he became famous as the commander of Confederate forces during the April 12-13, 1861 bombardment of Fort Sumter, which marked the beginning of the Civil War. Beauregard returned to New Orleans after the war, and was a leading business and political figure until his death in 1893.

Compare these rifled projectiles to the smooth round cannon balls of the preceding eras. The new, more powerful and accurate rifled artillery quickly reduced the masonry forts to rubble. These projectiles could penetrate deep into the walls and explode creating large craters. This often caused pieces of masonry to become deadly missiles. The solution was to protect the guns with earthen mounds on each side so that only a direct hit could damage or destroy the cannon. Notice the rifling on the inside of the cannon barrel that gave the projectile a spin. This greatly increased its accuracy and range.

Label for wax figure:

Jacob Stroyer age 13, slave and author

"In the summer of 1863 with thousands of other negroes... was sent to Sullivan's Island... to repair forts... While the men were engaged in such work, the boys of my age... waited on officers and carried water for the men at work... we fared better on these fortifications than we had at home on the plantations."

Photograph of Jacob Stroyer and title page from his book, My Life in the South, published in 1879

To load and fire the fort's muzzleloading cannon required a crew of at least 6 men and implements like those standing here. The rammer staff was used to seat the powder bag and cannonball into the bore of the gun. The wet sponge was used after each shot to extinguish any burning particles remaining in the bore. The worm was used to remove any remains of unburned powder bags.